

BOOK REVIEWS

Again Mizzi was hampered by official silence but through sheer patience he succeeded in interviewing a sufficiently large number of eye-witnesses to be able to provide a complete story and prove wrong the Fascist version of the spy's death.

Among the author's primary informants are Dr. Warrington himself, Mr. Vivian de Gray, a police officer (later Commissioner of Police) who was involved in the case against Borg Pisani, and Fr. F. Bilocca, one of the two Capuchins who assisted him in the final days in the death cell.

Mizzi also engages in an interesting discussion on the trial's outcome in the light of later legal action taken by the British against Maltese colleagues of Borg Pisani who had joined the Italian army during the war.

Għall-Holma ta' Hajtu, now in its second Maltese edition and due to be translated into Italian, puts in a novel perspective facts which prejudice and ignorance might have obfuscated. The passage of time has led to an objective assessment of Borg Pisani's "dedication" to his country.

JOE FELICE PACE

CASSAR, PAUL

Early Relations between Malta and the United States of America

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When in April 1753 the Liberty Bell cracked for the second time, the State House of Philadelphia turned to the firm of Pass and Stowe for a third, and hopefully better, example to be cast. Little is known of this John Pass, though we have the unimpeachable evidence of the Speaker of the Philadelphia Assembly that he was 'a native of the Isle of Malta'.

This, however, is not the earliest connection between the American States and Malta. As far back as 1719, the Order of St John had suffered considerable losses after an

ill-advised speculative investment in the so-called Mississippi Scheme.

Dr. Paul Cassar's *Early Relations between Malta and U.S.A.* traces the establishment and growth of relations between the two states right up to 1906. It is obvious that such a relationship had to be mainly maritime in character and though it was not exceptionally solid or profound, Dr Cassar's careful research principally in the Consular Despatches for Malta from 1801 to 1906 has enabled him to write a highly readable and informative account of life on the Island insofar as it touched upon the American Republic.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on 17 December 1796, making Malta one of the first countries to have a United States consular officer accredited to it. Relations reached an early and welcome climax soon after the British took over the Island; during the Tripolitan War of 1801-5 Malta proved its strategic value by allowing itself to be used as a depot for the supply of arms and men to a navy that was fighting a war three thousand miles away from its home base. Maltese sailors made up a considerable number of the sailors in the fleet that succeeded in ridding the Mediterranean of the Barbary Corsair menace.

Dr. Cassar's analysis of the consular despatches could not fail but bring out the characters and personalities of the various consuls who held office during the period. Of the ten consuls Dr. Cassar considers, the one who dominates the period is surely William Winthrop Andrews who held office for 35 years from 1834. Winthrop served his country well; his despatches betray an eager personality trying to please his American masters by sending a veritable flood of information. He reports on political developments, economic measures, social customs, military measures and so on, with the obvious intention of trying to upgrade his local office. Indeed his complaints about the expenses needed to make ends meet are the leit motif of his correspondence. It was fitting that it was during his term of office that the United States decided to make the Malta consulship a paid one in 1866.

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Dr. Cassar also writes about famous American visitors to the Island in the nineteenth century. It was an American, Andrew Bigelow, who wrote one of the earliest nineteenth century accounts of life in Malta. His book, *Travels in Malta and Sicily*, was published in 1831 and was based on what he saw and experienced in the course of a six week visit in 1827. His colourful and interesting narrative provides a most interesting commentary on Malta and the Maltese. Another well-known American visitor to Maltese shores was General W.T. Sherman, the Commander in Chief of the United States Army. Sherman was the Civil War general best known for his march from Ohio to the sea.

Another chapter deals with the repeated attempts to encourage Maltese migrants to settle in America. This migration never really appealed to the Maltese until the destitution brought about by the collapse of the war economy in 1919 forced many migrants to consider new countries instead of the traditional ones on the North African littoral.

Dr. Cassar's achievement lies in his serendipitous discovery of these consular despatches and their re-working in a highly readable and consistently interesting narrative that is attractive at various levels. The author's medical background is often betrayed by his careful annotation of medical facts and figures. Indeed he often goes slightly of his way to include such details.

The present volume, the second in the excellent series of Maltese Social Studies published by Midsea Books, is attractively produced, only just marred by the handful of misprints that seem to be the bug bear of local publications. This should however in no way detract from the merits of a book that has broken new ground as far as source material for modern Maltese history is concerned. Dr. Cassar assuringly indicates to other historians that there are many other fresh woods and pastures new ready to give up their riches to the patient and diligent researcher.

LOUIS J. SCERRI